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ABSTRACT

The college and university counseling center traditionally employs standard techniques in helping students, faculty, and staff in overcoming problems of mental stress (Berman, 1972). A technique suitable to both individual and group sessions, but rarely utilized is Re-Evaluation Co-Counseling or R.C. For the past twenty years, R.C. has gained an international following in affirming people as rational, intelligent, zestful, loving, and curious beings whose minds have become blocked and obstructed in the growth process from childhood to adulthood. Through the conscious discharge (e.g. crying, shaking, shivering, trembling, laughing, screaming, yawning, talking) of past accumulated hurts, one can work toward freedom from rigid behavior patterns toward an increased awareness of self. The co-counseling experience (two people acting as both client and counselor in alternating patterns) provides the means for discharging emotion in an effort to re-evaluate past hurts and behaviors. For effective peer counseling to be experienced, however, an understanding of RC theory must be established by a group leader in a setting from 8-20 weeks. (Author)

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RE-EVALUATION CO-COUNSELING: A METHOD OF PEER SELF HELP

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The college and university counseling center traditionally employs standard techniques in helping students, faculty, and staff in overcoming problems of mental stress (Berman, 1972). One technique suitable to both individual and group sessions, but rarely utilized is Re-Evaluation Co-Counseling or R.C. For the past twenty years, R.C. has gained an international following in affirming people as rational, intelligent, zestful, loving, and curious beings whose minds have become blocked and obstructed in the growth process from childhood to adulthood. Through the conscious discharge (e.g. crying, shaking, shivering, trembling, laughing, screaming, yawning, talking) of past accumulated hurts, one can work toward freedom from rigid behavior patterns toward an increased awareness of self (see figure 1).

The co-counseling experience (two people acting as both client and counselor in alternating patterns) provides the means for discharging emotion in an effort to re-evaluate past hurts and behaviors. For effective peer counseling to be experienced, however, an understanding of RC theory must be established by a group leader in a setting from 8-20 weeks.

THE THEORY

The central core of the theory focuses upon fixed, repetitive behaviors. These rigid patterns are not determined by genetic inheritance, but rather, are prompted by a specific sequence of stress which occurs during the lifetime of each individual. Succinctly stated, the theory holds that all patterns have their foundations rooted in stored tensions caused by psychological and

physical stress. It is hypothesized that if the natural healing process is not interrupted, the tensions will be stored only temporarily (Somers, 1972). However, if the process is interrupted (the more likely case), the tensions will result in patterned behavior.

Discharge is the healing process for eliminating this distress. Each level of hury corresponds to a type of discharge, and the client works to achieve full discharge. For example, after concentrated efforts, grief can be diminished by crying, anger by shouting, boredom by non-repetitive talking, and physical hurt by yawning (Jackins, 1962).

THEORETICAL GOAL

The goal of RC is to create an environment so that this discharge of distress will occur. This environment can be achieved through three steps: attention, validation, and self-directed behavior.

Attention is stressed from the first meeting of the client-counselor relationship. In a group meeting, the leader works toward attention by asking the participants to break up into pairs or partners, face each other, maintain eye contact, and introduce each other in a "mini counseling session." While holding hands, the partner who selects to be the counselor first, gives complete and undivided attention to the client, helps to channel the client's attention on the matter at hand, and encourages the client to discharge any distress.

Through the counselor's total attention, validation of the client is achieved. By listening attentively and observing any body language which contradicts the statements made by the client, the peer counselor therefore, displays a warm, accepting, respectful attitude toward the client. Rogers has called this posture "positive regard," Carkhuff views it as empathy-warmth-genuineness- and concreteness, and Ivey sees it as "attending behavior." Whatever phrase is used, the basic underlying principle is still the same: it is necessary to provide an accepting, positive atmosphere for the client so that discharge may occur. When the client makes disparaging remarks, the counselor can seek to counter them by validating the client and/or encouraging self-directed behavior and self appreciation. By stating positive phrases about him/her self, some form of physical manifestation and discharge can occur in the client, and progress toward self actualization can begin.

The principle of self direction encourages the client to take charge of each session. The counselor can continue to provide attention and approval to the client,while presenting the opportunity for the client to experiment with a wide range of internal feelings within the context of a safe environment.

During this expression by the client, the counselor refrains from offering interpretation or advice, neither interrupting nor directing the client's statements, but merely trying to facilitate discharge from the client.

If the counselor follows the principles of complete attention and validation, the client should be able to identify distressful material and express feelings about the experience. Through the successful discharge process, the client will suddenly be able to recall new memories and insights from a present perspective. This process is known as "re-evaluation." When the client has discharged all of the distress, the rigid behavior patterns tied to these events will also disappear.

If the client is unable to discharge, however, three methods can be followed by the counselor: repetition, contradiction, and free association. Repetition is closely related to the active listening practiced by the counselor. When the client expresses an emotional statement but does not discharge, the counselor can encourage the client to repeat the phrase once or several times until discharge occurs.

If repeating an emotion-laden phrase does not produce discharge, the counselor may suggest the process of contradiction. This technique requires the client to reverse his verbal phrase, tone of voise, posture, or facial expression. If the client admits failure, then by stating the opposite, active discharge of grief may occur.

If contradicition does not help the client to break the non-discharge pattern, free association may help. This technique requires the client to say the first thought which enters his/her mind without consciously seeking a specific answer. From this experience, a phrase or discussion may emerge, which, when repeated,

will elicit discharge.

The RC group provides the framework for the discharge process. With a certified leader in charge who can explain the theory and applicability to distressful situations, partners can begin to eliminate stored-up hurts and restrictive behavior patterns which had previously been conditioned and reinforced.

ROLE OF THE LEADER

The leader's role is to keep communication open between the participants, clarify and discuss theory, and validate each member. If the partners elect to attend group meetings, as well as co-counsel outside of the group, the leader can become a motivating force. The leader serves as the glue which binds the group t gether, and the safety net upon which to fall when old behavior patterns are broken.

Re-Evaluation Co-Counseling is one of many self-help theories adaptable to the university counseling center. It has applicability to both large and small group settings, but takes careful planning by the leader and full understanding of theory by the co-counselors to implement successfully. In the words of its founder, Harvey Jackins, RC theory hold that "to live in the best way, to really be intelligent in the highest sense, is to be aware of what is going on, to take charge of the situation, to have ideas of what kind of future we want, and to take steps to bring it about."

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DISCHARGE INDICATIONS AND SEQUENCE CHART

"Kind" of Painful Emotion Tension		Manifestation During Discharge
ZEST (absence of Painful Emotion)		Happy relaxation, turning of attention away from experience of hurt.
BOREDOM		Laughter Animated Talking Reluctant Talking
LIGHT ANGERS		Laughter, warm perspiration
HEAVY ANGERS		Angry noises, violent movements, warm perspiration
LIGHT FEARS (Embarrassments)		Laughter, cold perspiration
HEAVY FEARS		Trembling, shivering, cold perspiration, active kidneys
GRIEFS		Tears, sobbing
PHYSICAL PAINS AND TENSIONS		Yawns, stretching, scratching.

The client will begin substantial discharge as close to the bottom of the painful emotion part of this chart as the tensions exist in that particular pattern and/or as he is able to discharge and will then tend to move upward on the chart as regularly as his particular discharge-inhibiting patterns permit.

FIGURE 1